

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

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1 (Currently amended) A method for replacing an attachment to an email
2 message with a reference to a location of the attachment, comprising:
3 receiving the email message;
4 examining the email message to determine if the email message includes
5 an attachment; and
6 if the email message includes the attachment,
7 storing the attachment at a location on a communication
8 network from which the attachment can be retrieved,
9 modifying the email message by replacing the attachment
10 with a reference specifying the location of the attachment on the
11 communication network, and
12 sending the modified email message to a recipient of the
13 email message, and
14 deleting the attachment from the location on the
15 communication network after one of:
16 receiving a notification that all recipients of
17 the email message have retrieved the attachment.
18 and
19 receiving a notification that all recipients of
20 the email message have deleted the email message.

1 2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving the modified email message at the recipient; and
3 using the reference specifying the location of the attachment to retrieve the
4 attachment across the communication network.

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1 3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein retrieving the attachment
2 includes authenticating the recipient to a computer system upon which the
3 attachment is stored.

1 4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the email message
2 includes receiving the email message at one of,
3 an application residing on a computer system belonging to a sender of the
4 email message;
5 an email server through which the email message is sent;
6 a firewall that protects at least one trusted computer system from
7 communications across the communication network; and
8 a gateway that converts the email message from a first format to a second
9 format.

1 5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising allowing the
2 attachment to be updated at the location on the communication network.

1 6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising
2 deleting the attachment from the location on the communication network after at
3 least one of:
4 an expiration of a time period;
5 sending a notification to recipients of the email message that the
6 attachment is to be deleted;
7 receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have
8 retrieved the attachment;

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9 receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have
10 deleted the email message;
11 receiving a command to delete the attachment from a sender of the email
12 message; and
13 storing the attachment to archival storage.

1 7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the communication network
2 includes at least one of:
3 a computer network; and
4 a telephone network.

1 8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein if the email message
2 includes the attachment, the method further comprises:
3 asking a sender of the email message whether to replace the attachment
4 with the reference specifying the location of the attachment; and
5 replacing the attachment only if the sender agrees to replace the
6 attachment.

1 9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the attachment is a file.

1 10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the reference specifying the
2 location of the attachment includes a uniform resource locator (URL).

1 11. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium storing
2 instructions that when executed by a computer cause the computer to perform a
3 method for replacing an attachment to an email message with a reference to a
4 location of the attachment, the method comprising:

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5 receiving the email message;
6 examining the email message to determine if the email message includes
7 an attachment; and
8 if the email message includes the attachment,
9 storing the attachment at a location on a communication
10 network from which the attachment can be retrieved,
11 modifying the email message by replacing the attachment
12 with a reference specifying the location of the attachment on the
13 communication network, and
14 sending the modified email message to a recipient of the
15 email message, and
16 deleting the attachment from the location on the
17 communication network after one of:
18 receiving a notification that all recipients of
19 the email message have retrieved the attachment,
20 and
21 receiving a notification that all recipients of
22 the email message have deleted the email message.

1 12. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 11,
2 wherein the method further comprises:
3 receiving the modified email message at the recipient; and
4 using the reference specifying the location of the attachment to retrieve the
5 attachment across the communication network.

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13. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 12,
2 wherein retrieving the attachment includes authenticating the recipient to a
3 computer system upon which the attachment is stored.

14. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 11,
2 wherein receiving the email message includes receiving the email message at one
3 of,
4 an application residing on a computer system belonging to a sender of the
5 email message;
6 an email server through which the email message is sent;
7 a firewall that protects at least one trusted computer system from
8 communications across the communication network; and
9 a gateway that converts the email message from a first format to a second
10 format.

15. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 11,
2 wherein the method further comprises allowing the attachment to be updated at
3 the location on the communication network.

16. (Currently amended) The computer-readable storage medium of claim
2 11, wherein the method further comprises deleting the attachment from the
3 location on the communication network after at least one of:
4 an expiration of a time period;
5 sending a notification to recipients of the email message that the
6 attachment is to be deleted;
7 ~~receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have~~
8 ~~retrieved the attachment;~~

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9 receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have
10 deleted the email message;
11 receiving a command to delete the attachment from a sender of the email
12 message; and
13 storing the attachment to archival storage.

1 17. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 11,
2 wherein the communication network includes at least one of:
3 a computer network; and
4 a telephone network.

1 18. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 11,
2 wherein if the email message includes the attachment, the method further
3 comprises:
4 asking a sender of the email message whether to replace the attachment
5 with the reference specifying the location of the attachment; and
6 replacing the attachment only if the sender agrees to replace the
7 attachment.

1 19. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 11,
2 wherein the attachment is a file.

1 20. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 11,
2 wherein the reference specifying the location of the attachment includes a uniform
3 resource locator (URL).

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21. (Currently amended) An apparatus that replaces an attachment to an email message with a reference to a location of the attachment, comprising:
an examination mechanism that examines the email message to determine if the email message includes an attachment; and
a replacement mechanism, wherein if the email message includes the attachment the replacement mechanism is configured to,
store the attachment at a location on a communication network from which the attachment can be retrieved,
modify the email message by replacing the attachment with a reference specifying the location of the attachment on the communication network, and
send the modified email message to a recipient of the email message; and
a deletion mechanism that is configured to delete the attachment from the location on the communication network after one of:
receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have retrieved the attachment, and
receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have deleted the email message.

22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, further comprising:
a second receiving mechanism at the recipient that is configured to receive the modified email message; and
a retrieval mechanism at the recipient that is configured to use the reference specifying the location of the attachment to retrieve the attachment across the communication network.

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1 23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the retrieval mechanism
2 is configured to authenticate the recipient to a computer system upon which the
3 attachment is stored.

1 24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the replacement
2 mechanism is located on one of,
3 an application residing on a computer system belonging to a sender of the
4 email message;
5 an email server through which the email message is sent;
6 a firewall that protects at least one trusted computer system from
7 communications across the communication network; and
8 a gateway that converts the email message from a first format to a second
9 format.

1 25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, further comprising an updating
2 mechanism that is configured to allow the attachment to be updated at the location
3 on the communication network.

1 26. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 21, ~~further comprising a~~
2 wherein the deletion mechanism that is further configured to delete the attachment
3 from the location on the communication network after at least one of:
4 an expiration of a time period;
5 sending a notification to recipients of the email message that the
6 attachment is to be deleted;
7 ~~receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have~~
8 ~~retrieved the attachment;~~

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9 receiving a notification that all recipients of the email message have
10 deleted the email message;
11 receiving a command to delete the attachment from a sender of the email
12 message; and
13 storing the attachment to archival storage.

1 27. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the communication
2 network includes at least one of:
3 a computer network; and
4 a telephone network.

1 28. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein if the email message
2 includes the attachment, the replacement mechanism is configured to:
3 ask a sender of the email message whether to replace the attachment with
4 the reference specifying the location of the attachment; and to
5 replace the attachment only if the sender agrees to replace the attachment.

1 29. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the attachment is a file.

1 30. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the reference specifying
2 the location of the attachment includes a uniform resource locator (URL).